

# Partner School Partner Teacher Newsletter

## *Every Kid in a Park:*

*An opportunity for current 4<sup>th</sup> graders AND their families to access their federal lands and waters for free during the 2015-16 school year*

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In order to kick off this initiative, 90 fourth graders from Lake Nokomis Community School Keewaydin Campus arrived at the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center on Thursday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, eager to learn about and see migrating birds and to receive their Every Kid in a Park Pass. Every Kid in a Park is an initiative that President Obama signed in February of this year in an effort to allow and motivate more kids and their families to enjoy our country's national parks, wildlife refuges, monuments, waters and more.



Photo by Tina Shaw/USFWS

This annual pass will be good until August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016 and is available to 4<sup>th</sup> graders for free, instead of the normal \$80. There are three different ways to sign up, but all of them involve the following website: [www.everykidinapark.gov/get-your-pass/](http://www.everykidinapark.gov/get-your-pass/).

This portal allows fourth graders to sign themselves up for the voucher, parents to sign up their fourth graders, or educators to sign up their fourth grade students. After

printing out the paper voucher, the fourth grader can exchange it for the plastic card by visiting the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge's Visitor Center in Bloomington or the National Park Service's Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Visitor Center in Saint Paul (in the Science Museum).

### Special points of interest:

- Learn more about the Refuge Phenology Trail that is coming soon!
- Find out about our new staff members.
- Do you have ideas you can share with other teachers? Check out Page 4!

Refuge staff thoroughly enjoyed igniting and deepening your student's outdoor knowledge this summer with Explorers Club and School's Out: Refuge Biology Camp. Students were able to engineer wildlife shelters, survey birds, capture nature through a camera lens and much more.

We thank you for informing your families about our summer programs!



Additionally, we hope to keep offering these special programs via the Refuge EE Partnership Programs. These camps and clubs are available for students who have completed grades 3, 4, 5, and 6. Please join us for some summer fun!

## *Summer Clubs and Camps Another Success*

## Partner Teachers: Scheduling a Field Trip

All scheduling for Partner Teachers will begin **after all Partner School groups have been scheduled**. All possible days for scheduling will be run Tuesday to Friday between 9:00 to 3:00. Due to limited staff, we will no longer hold afterschool programs.

This year, in an effort to streamline the reservation process, staff initiated an on-line process. Partner Teachers will be emailed a spreadsheet containing available dates and times at either the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center or the Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center.

The Survey Monkey link will be open to everyone to submit their scheduling needs for ten days between 7:00 am on the first day of the survey and will close on the last day at 11:00 pm for the following dates:

Winter – December 10<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>

Spring – March 10<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>

If you miss the on-line open registration period, please have the following information available BEFORE calling or emailing your reservation request. *Due to the popularity of this program, dates can not be "held" until all field trip information is entered.*

### Here is what your scheduler needs to know:

- 2 field trip dates and times in order of preference
- Number of Partner Teachers coming (teachers not enrolled in the program are considered chaperones only).
- Number of chaperones
- Arrival/departure times
- Curriculum choices
- Extra curriculum needs (DVD?)
- Will you be having lunch?
- Are there students/chaperones with special needs?

## Bus Reimbursement: Do you Know Your Deadline?

Due to the need to support our growing program and to accurately track the seasonal costs of busing, we have made several bus policy changes.

- Please "buddy up" with another class to fill your field trip bus. **To avoid going over the 70 rider school bus capacity** and initiating the need for a 2nd bus, chaperones should car pool from your school to the field trip site OR come directly to the refuge to meet your class.
- **All bus invoices are to be received on or before the following dates:**

Fall field trips – December 15

Winter field trips – March 15

Spring field trips – June 15

Once the field trip is complete, you should receive a bus invoice at the school. Please send that invoice directly to:

Suzanne Trapp

Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center

15865 Rapids Lake Road

Carver, MN 55315

Invoices are generally paid within a month of receipt. Bus invoices received after the above dates **will not be reimbursed**.



## Refuge Phenology Trail Coming Soon...

Thanks to a grant from the Hands on the Land Organization, Refuge friends Inc. has contracted with 3 local teachers to incorporate Nature's Notebook into middle and high school curriculum. Using this citizen-

science based national phenology data system, participating teachers and students will collect valuable data right outside their classroom door as well as on 3 locations of the refuge. Field testing starts this fall and will continue into the spring. Keep your eyes out for more information about getting involved as this project progresses. In the meantime, visit [https://www.usanpn.org/natures\\_notebook](https://www.usanpn.org/natures_notebook) to discover the wealth of resources available to teachers at Nature's Notebook.

## Staff Updates: Comings and Goings

*Kristin Raveling*, Visitor Services Specialist, has left the Refuge staff to work in the private sector. During her fourteen years at Minnesota Valley NWR, Kristin has been a critical manager of our social media, along with photographing and documenting many Refuge events, and teaching and planning programming for the homeschool groups that use the Refuge as a classroom. We all wish her well as she embarks on a new adventure!



*Mara Koenig*, Visitor Services Specialist, has moved down the road to the Midwest Regional Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Bloomington, MN. Mara has worked at the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center for almost twelve years and helped to develop the Partner Schools and Partner Teacher Programs as well as numerous special events. Her new position as a Public Affairs Specialist gives her a bigger voice and the opportunity to communicate the stories of conservation projects in our eight state region.



### Important changes to note:

For *Partner Schools* **Suzanne Trapp** is now the primary contact for both the Bloomington and Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Centers. You can contact her at (952) 361-4502 or [suzanne\\_trapp@fws.gov](mailto:suzanne_trapp@fws.gov).

For *Partner Teachers* **Chelsi Burns** is now the primary contact for both the Bloomington and Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Centers. You can contact her at (952) 361-4511 or [chelsi\\_burns@fws.gov](mailto:chelsi_burns@fws.gov).

## 2015-16 Partner School Practicum Interns are here!

Refuge staff are excited to introduce Refuge Partner School students and teachers to this year's new practicum interns: Elise Mohn and Sophia Crosby. Both practicum interns will be with us through the winter season. Be sure to say hello!

*Elise Mohn* is currently in her senior year at the University of Minnesota and is pursuing a degree in Geography and GIS. This past summer she was a Pathways Intern at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and we are excited that she is continuing to work at the refuge. Additionally, she was the head coach for White Bear Girls Lacrosse, where she worked with 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders to develop skills, bond as a team and maintain healthy self-esteem.



*Sophia Crosby* is a graduate from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities with a BS in Fisheries and Wildlife, with an emphasis in Conservation Biology. In addition to her degree, Sophia has a wealth of field experience and she is coming to us from California, where she has been working as a California Spotted Owl Field Technician. Previously she has worked as a Sharp-tailed Grouse Field Technician, a Research Assistant in the University of Minnesota Monarch Lab, and a Mammal Intern at the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center.



*Alaina Vonau* is returning as the Lead Practicum Teaching Intern! She is coming back to the Refuge after a summer season working as a Neighborhood Naturalist for the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board, where she taught preschool and youth classes, camps, canoeing programs and also brought education animals to larger events, such as Bullwinkle the Bull Snake (see picture).



## Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center  
15865 Rapids Lake Road  
Carver, MN 55315  
(952) 361-4500

Bloomington Education and Visitor Center  
3815 American Blvd. East  
Bloomington, MN 55425  
(952) 854-5900

### Check us out our social media sites

[http://www.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota\\_valley/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota_valley/)

<https://www.facebook.com/MNvalleyNWR>

<https://twitter.com/USFWSmnvalley>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmidwest>

## Costs are **RISING!**

As the Refuge Partner Teacher and Partner Schools Programs continue to grow, so do the bussing expenses.

Refuge Friends Inc. is looking for local businesses interested in *sponsoring* refuge field trips for their local school or for schools within their school district.

If you know of a business that you believe would be interested in participating, please contact: Steven Sutter, President, Refuge Friends Inc. @ Steven\_Sutter@fws.gov.



Blue Goose Bus Fund SNAPSHOT		
SCHOOL YEAR	STUDENT VISITS	TOTAL BUS COSTS
2014-15	10,293	\$32,629
2013-14	8,062	\$38,027
2012-13	6,665	\$23,140

## EE Cohort: Teacher Network for Environmental Education



**Environmental Education Cohort**  
Sponsored by the Jeffers Foundation and  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



***Join a dedicated group of educators focused on integrating and embedding Environmental Education and Outdoor Instruction into every day curriculum.***

We are currently looking for volunteers to lead this group in topic and sight selection and meeting planning. If you are interested in seeing this group continue during the 2015-16 academic year and are willing to help please go to:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EECohort>

Call Suzanne Trapp at (952) 361-4502 for more information.